



JUNIOR COMPETITION CIRCUIT ATHLETE PROGRESSION GUIDE 2026

This guide explains how junior athletes progress through the USA Diving Junior Competition Circuit from start to finish. Advancement is based on competition results at each stage.

Age Groups (World Aquatics Definitions)

Junior age groups follow World Aquatics (AQUA) age group definitions and are based on the athlete's age on December 31 of the calendar year:

Group A (AQUA): Ages 16-18*

Group B (AQUA): Ages 14-15

Group C (AQUA): Ages 12-13

Group D (AQUA): Ages 11 and under

*Group A athletes may continue to compete in Junior events until the day they turn 19.

Qualifying Events

Events required by participants to advance to the next step of competition. Participation in qualifying events requires a Competition Athlete Membership.

Non-Qualifying Events

Events not required by participants and do not count towards advancements, but may be competed.

Participation in non-qualifying events requires an Athlete Membership.

Step 1: Entry into the Junior Competition Circuit

Where an athlete begins depends on their age group.

Groups A and B

- Group A and Group B athletes begin the Junior Competition Circuit at Regional Championships.
- Athletes compete in 1-meter and 3-meter qualifying events to advance to Zone Championships. Athletes are not required to compete platform at Regional Championships and may still compete in that event at Zone Championships if they do not advance on 1-meter or 3-meter.

From Each Regional Championship:

Advancing to Zone Championships

- The top 15 athletes in each qualifying event advance to Zone Championships.
- Additional athletes may also advance by achieving the average 15th-place score from any Regional Championship.
 - The qualifying score will be calculated by averaging the scores of the 15th-place diver (or the last diver if there are fewer than 15 event entries) in each event from each Region.
 - Any score not within one standard deviation (as calculated by divemeets.com) of the average will be deleted, and the average will be recalculated.

Groups C and D

- Group C and Group D athletes' qualifying events begin the Junior Competition Circuit at Zone Championships.
- These age groups are not required to compete at Regional Championships, but may compete in non-qualifying events at Regional Championships

Step 2: Zone Championships

- Groups A and B advance to Zone Championships from Regional Championships.
- Groups C and D enter the Junior Competition Circuit at Zone Championships.
- Athletes compete in 1-meter, 3-meter and platform as official qualifying events. This is the first stage of the Junior Circuit, where platform is an official qualifying event.

From Each Zone Championship:

Advancing to Junior National Championships

- The top 3 non-prequalified athletes in each Zone Championship event advance directly to the preliminaries of the USA Diving Junior National Championships.
 - Should any of the qualifiers who place in the top-3 from a Zone Championship opt not to advance to the USA Diving Junior National Championships, the next highest placed U.S. athlete shall be eligible to attend the USA Diving Junior National Championship up to **sixth place.**

Advancing to East / West / Central Championships

- Athletes placing 4th through 18th advance to the preliminary event in their corresponding East, West, or Central Championship.
- Additional athletes may also advance by achieving the average 18th-place score from any Zone Championship.
 - The qualifying score will be calculated by averaging the scores of the 18th-place diver (or the last diver if there are fewer than 18 event entries) in each event from each Zone Championship.

Step 3: East / West / Central Championships

Athletes who advance from Zone Championships compete at the designated East/West/Central Championship as determined by their Zone. These competitions provide an additional opportunity to qualify for the Junior National Championships.

- Competition is conducted in a preliminaries-to-finals format.
- The top 12 non-prequalified U.S. Divers advance directly from prelims to finals in same-day individual events.

From Each East, West, or Central Championship: Advancing to Junior National Championships

- The top 3 non-prequalified athletes in each event advance to Junior National Championships.
- Additionally, the scores of the 3rd-place divers in each event from the East/West/Central Championships will be averaged. Athletes placing 4th through 6th who meet or exceed this average will also advance to the Junior National Championships.
 - Should any of the qualifiers who place in the top-3 from the East/West/Central Championship opt not to advance to the USA Diving Junior National Championships, the next highest placed U.S. athlete shall be eligible to attend the USA Diving Junior National Championship up to sixth place.

Step 4: Junior National Championships

Junior National Championships represent the final stage of the Junior Competition Circuit.

Advancing to Junior National Championships:

- Zone Championships, and
- East, West, or Central Championships.
- 2025-2026 Tier 3 Junior High Performance Squad

At Junior Nationals:

- Competition is conducted in a preliminaries-to-finals format.
- Athletes advance directly from prelims to finals in same-day individual events.

Junior Circuit Pathway Summary:

The Junior Competition Circuit generally follows this progression:

- Group A / B:
 - Regional Championship → Zone → East / West / Central → Junior Nationals
- Group C / D:
 - Zone Championship → East / West / Central → Junior Nationals

At each level, advancement is based on placement and score thresholds defined for that specific stage.

Synchronized Diving Qualification

- To be eligible to compete in synchronized diving events, at least one diver on a synchro team must be qualified in at least one individual event within the Junior Competition Circuit.
- Minimum degree of difficulty requirements for synchronized events are established by the High Performance Director in consultation with the Committee for Competitive Excellence.

YMCA National Champions

- YMCA National Champions in each age group shall qualify to the Preliminary round of the East/West/Central Championships in the event(s) in which they were the champion.
- Qualification does not extend beyond the Preliminary round. Eligible athletes may enter any one East/West/Central Championship meet in the qualified event(s).

Rule Updates, Awards and Team Scoring

- **602.8 Foreign Athlete Declarations**

- All foreign divers must be declared by the athlete or their coach at each and every meet, before the start of the first event. Declarations shall be made at the official Coaches' Meeting, or in advance if required by the Meet Director. Failure to declare a foreign diver at that meet before the start of competition will render that athlete ineligible to participate until the declaration is completed, and the athlete shall not be permitted to advance to the next round or to the next level of competition.

- **602.20**

- (g) Foreign divers are not eligible to earn team points. If such an athlete finishes in a scoring position, the team points and place shall drop down to the next highest-placing U.S. citizen athlete.

- **106.9 Coaches' & Technical Meetings**

- (a) Attendance at Coaches' and Technical Meetings is mandatory at USA Diving events. All registered coaches and officials attending the meet must either: (1) be present in person, (2) attend virtually, or (3) review the official recording of the meeting and sign an acknowledgment of completion before the start of the first event. (b) Failure to meet this requirement shall result in the coach being deemed ineligible to participate on deck until compliance is verified.

Entry Fees

	Entry Fee- Qualifying Event	Entry Fee- Non-qualifying Event
Region Championships	\$85	\$45
Zone Championships	\$90	N/A
East/West/Central Championships	\$115	N/A
National Championships	\$125	N/A

As of the 2026 season, coach and athlete registration deadlines will be the same. Coaches will incur a \$50 Late Registration fee and athletes will incur a \$100 Late Registration fee. Please check the individual event pages for specific details on when the Late Registration fee will take effect.

If an athlete is turning 18 this calendar year, they must fulfill the background screening requirement and Safe Sport training, even if they are still 17 during their competition period. They will receive an email once the background screening has cleared. Once their background screening has cleared, they may register for their selected Region Championship, paying the late fee if it is after the late fee deadline.

Additional Information

- Athletes who are members of the 2025–2026 Tier 3 Junior High Performance Squad are pre-qualified directly to the preliminaries of the Junior National Championships. If these athletes choose to compete in other Junior Circuit events, their participation will not reduce the number of advancement opportunities available to other athletes, and their results will not be used when calculating qualification score averages. Additional guidance will be communicated separately as policies related to High Performance Squad qualification and the participation of non-U.S. athletes within the Junior Competition Circuit are finalized.

Event Dates, Locations, and Registration Deadlines

Event dates, locations, and registration deadlines are posted on the USA Diving calendar at usadiving.org/calendar.